

CSCE NEWS RELEASE

Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe

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The Continued Use of Torture in Turkey

Subject of Commission Briefing

**For Immediate Release
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Washington, DC—Today the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe announced its forthcoming briefing:

Turkey and Torture

Tuesday, April 8

2:00–4:00 p.m.

Room 2255, Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, D.C.

Open to all Members, Congressional Staff, the Public and the Press

A Question and Answer period will follow the initial presentations

Making presentations will be:

Holly Cartner, Executive Director of Human Rights Watch/Helsinki, will discuss the findings contained in Human Rights Watch's recent report *Turkey: Torture and Mistreatment in Pre-Trial Detention by Anti-Terror Police* that documents a systemic pattern of torture and other abuse by anti-terror police units. Following the Romanian revolution, Ms. Cartner was hired by Helsinki Watch in 1990 to open an office in Bucharest. Since then she has regularly visited Romania, Bulgaria and other parts of Eastern and Central Europe. She has written extensively on issues of human rights abuses

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The Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe by law monitors and encourages progress in implementing the provisions of the Helsinki Accords. The Commission, created in 1976, is made up of nine Senators, nine Representatives and one official each from the Departments of State, Commerce and Defense. For more information about the Commission, please call (202) 225-1901.

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against the Roma minority in Romania and Bulgaria, as well as on xenophobic violence in Germany. She received her M.A. in political science from Columbia in 1987, her law degree from Columbia School of Law in 1987, and her B.A. in political science and sociology from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 1981.

Erik Holst, M.D., President, Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims, and Vice President, International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims, Copenhagen. The Rehabilitation and Research Centre for Torture Victims is an independent, humanitarian, non-political institution established in 1982 to help victims of torture and to contribute to the prevention of torture. A Professor of Social Medicine at the University of Copenhagen from 1978-92, Dr. Holst served as President of the Danish Medical Association from 1980-86, as Co-Editor-in-Chief of the Danish Medical Journal, 1967-80, and as President, Standing Committee of Doctors of the European Community (European Medical Association) 1977-79.

Douglas A. Johnson, Executive Director, Center for Victims of Torture. The Center for Victims of Torture is a private, non-profit organization which was founded in 1985 to provide direct care to survivors of politically motivated torture and members of their families. The first organization of its kind in the U.S., and one of the largest worldwide, the Center has pioneered a comprehensive assessment and care program which is unique in this country. In his current position since 1988, Mr. Johnson has been an Associate Fellow, Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. (1985-1993), an Associate Fellow, Program on Strategic Uses of Non-Violence, Albert Einstein Institute (1988), and was co-founder of the Infant Formula Action Coalition (INFACT) and National Chair 1977-1985 in Minneapolis. He received his MPPM from the Yale School of Organization of Management (1988) and his B.A. cum laude in Philosophy from Macalester College (1975).

Background

Despite the Turkish Constitution's ban on torture, and public pledges by successive governments to end torture, the practice continues. Torture remains a grave problem and stands in clear violation of Turkey's legal obligations under numerous international conventions, including the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the UN Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the European Convention

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for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture has found the incidence of torture and ill-treatment in Turkey to be widespread. The UN Committee on Torture has referred to systemic use of torture in Turkey. While the Turkish parliament recently passed a law reducing the detention periods for certain suspects, it is unclear what impact the changes will have on the common use of torture by Turkish police.

These breaches of international humanitarian law are by no means limited to southeastern Turkey where the government has engaged in a lengthy armed conflict with the terrorist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK).

Commonly employed methods of torture reported by the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey's torture treatment centers include: high-pressure cold water hoses, electric shocks, beating on the soles of the feet, beating of the genitalia, hanging by the arms, blindfolding, sleep deprivation, deprivation of clothing, systemic beatings, and vaginal and anal rape with truncheons and, in some instances, gun barrels. The victims of such heinous crimes are not limited to adults, but also include children.

Regrettably, the perpetrators of such gross human rights violations are rarely, if ever, held accountable for their actions. Human rights attorneys and physicians who treat the victims of torture say that most people suspected of political crimes suffer some form of torture during periods of incommunicado detention in police stations before they are brought before a court. Those who seek to assist the victims of torture are often themselves subject to harassment and intimidation. Treatment and rehabilitation centers, operated by the Human Rights Foundation of Turkey have been prosecuted by the Turkish government for refusing to comply with orders that they hand over the names of their clients and the health professionals treating them. The trial against such a facility in Adana is underway.